Science Policy in the USSR

Recent Developments

Science policy appears to be undergoing revision. These changes are largely unstated and evolutionary rather than representing sharp breaks with the past. Greater emphasis is being placed on non-military research, particularly in consumer related areas. New fields of research, such as studies on the environment, are being undertaken. The influence of political dogma on science is gradually on the wane. Secrecy is slowly being eroded from at least non-military R&D. Greater foreign travel by Soviet scientists, and the US-USSR science agreements, reflect this small movement toward a more open policy. The greatest policy change has occurred in the approach toward the exploitation of Western technology. Believing that the technology gap is widening, the USSR no longer is satisfied to merely learn from the West. It is endeavoring to get the West to actively participate in Soviet development through the installation of turn-key plants, licensing agreements, and exchange programs of scientists.

Policy Formulation

In the USSR, all basic decisions concerning science goals, resources (men and money) and organizational structure are made at the highest levels of government. No science effort exists independent of government control; rather, control and coordination extend downward to operational science in state laboratories, industrial plants, and universities.

The State agencies for scientific matters are responsible and subordinate to the USSR Supreme Soviet (Parliament) which, as the supreme state political authority, decides matters of science policy. The Supreme Soviet gives legislative force both to the plans for developing the national economy and to the state budgets of the USSR, which incorporate the plans for developing and financing science and technology. The USSR Council of Ministers exercises general authority over scientific and technical activities. It examines and endorses (1) the basic orientation of scientific and technical development, (2) plans for the development of science and technology, and (3) plans for the financing of scientific and technical research.

The USSR Council of Ministers is directly supported in preparing directives for the development of science and technology by its own State Committee for Science and Technology. This committee is responsible for determining the basic trends in scientific and technical development and for organizing thorough study of crucial scientific and technical problems. The State Committee sees to it that a uniform state policy is achieved in the matter of research. It is a national administrative body, responsible for planning and financing of science and the supply of material and equipment to scientific institutions.

Policy Characteristics

Soviet leaders have consistently viewed science and technology as fundamental to the growth of military and economic strength. Accordingly, such research and development have always enjoyed high national priority. This priority is reflected in the share of national resources devoted to science (higher than in the US), by the prestige and rewards accorded scientists, and by the involvement of the highest levels of government in setting science policy.

Centralized decision making in the USSR, however, has not resulted in a clearly ennunciated science policy. Details of science policy are generally treated as state secrets and often it is not until the end product emerges that a major policy goal becomes clear. The Soviet space program illustrates this characteristic. Some Soviet scientists complain that the pervasive secrecy leads to redundant research and inhibits technological transfer.

Another feature of Soviet science policy is the concentration of resources in priority areas. Military and space programs and developments which contribute to an image of technological parity with, or superiority to, the US receive highest priority and explain in part the secrecy surrounding science. R&D related to civilian pursuits has been a step-child to the military-space sphere in terms of both quantity and quality of science inputs.

Research in the social sciences has been virtually non-existent until very recently. This neglect resulted from the suffocating impact of Marxian dogma. For example, psychology was not recognized as a science in the Soviet Union until the late 1960s, and even today there are fewer than 1,000 PhD level psychologists. Agricultural research was stifled for

more than two decades by the hare-brained notions of T.D. Lysenko, whose political clout was such that he not only dictated policy but also prevented the airing of divergent views. Some areas of science, however, such as those affecting the military, were largely sheltered from political factors.

Finally, Soviet science policy has been characterized by the systematic exploitation of foreign technology. Recognizing that a considerable gap exists between its technologies and those of the developed West, the USSR apparently believes that it can leap-frog intermediate stages of technological development by relying on foreign research.

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TRANSMITTAL SLIP	DATE 22 March 1974
TO: [redacted] ExSt/DCD/USSR	
ROOM NO. 902	BUILDING Key

REMARKS:

Nomie -

Per our telephone conversation the other day, attached is the MR on Soviet Science policy that [redacted] wrote -- if you have any questions, please call him on extension 5107. I have talked to him and told him that you might be in touch with him -- you might suggest he send you a copy of anything further he does on this subject.

Trudy

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FROM: [redacted] O/SA/ER

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